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SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM  
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA  
HQ USAF FOR XXXX  
DA WASHDC FOR SASA  
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA  
USCINCENT MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR  
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD  
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD  
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL  
PARIS ALSO FOR POL  
ROME FOR MFO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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- [1. Mideast](#)
- [2. Syria Governance](#)
- [3. Germany: New Government](#)

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Key stories in the media:  
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All media (lead stories in Ha'aretz and Jerusalem Post) reported on President Bush's meeting with PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas at the White House on Thursday. The media reported Bush's demand that Abbas disarm the terrorist organizations and that the President did not address the issue of Hamas's participation in the Palestinian Legislative Council elections. However, Ha'aretz quoted Palestinian officials as saying, following the meeting, that the U.S. will not actively oppose Hamas's participation in the elections. Jerusalem Post reported that President Bush publicly supported Abbas and praised his leadership. However, the newspaper writes that in private, the differences between the U.S. and the PA over the question of Hamas's participation in the elections still remain. The media note that Bush only referred to "armed gangs," and did not mention Hamas by name. Major media reported that Bush hinted that a Palestinian state might not be established during his term. The media also note that the President urged Israel to halt settlement construction.

Ha'aretz reported that PM Sharon's bureau insisted that there is no real disagreement with Washington over Hamas's participation in the PA elections, although other officials disputed this claim. The newspaper says that Sharon's position continues to be that Israel will not facilitate the elections if Hamas runs. Ha'aretz also cited Sharon's bureau as saying that Bush's demands and criticism of Israel are not new, that "the pressure continues to be on the Palestinians to fight terror as a first step," and that the fact that Bush voiced no criticism of Israel's military responses to terror since the disengagement was also an achievement. Ha'aretz also quoted Israeli officials who are not part of Sharon's inner circle as saying that Sharon's bureau is not listening to increasingly unhappy messages from the U.S. administration. Leading media (banners in Maariv and Yediot) reported that last night, UN investigator Detlev Mehlis presented his interim report about the assassination of former Lebanese FM Rafiq Hariri to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Without establishing a direct connection with Syrian President Bashar Assad, Mehlis's report indicates that the order to kill Hariri came from Damascus and that the Syrian regime tried to obstruct the investigation. Leading media reported that the U.S. and France are preparing an ultimatum to Assad, according to which severe sanctions could be imposed on Syria at the UN Security Council. Israel Radio reported that Syria and Lebanese President Emile Lahud

rejected the accusations in the report.

Leading media quoted Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz as saying in London Thursday that Israel does not intend to permanently ban Palestinian vehicle traffic on the West Bank's main roads, and that Israel's latest action was temporary. Mofaz was quoted as saying that it does not make sense to separate Israeli and Palestinian traffic.

Echoed by major media, Israel TV Washington correspondent Yaron Dekel revealed last night that a USD 100-million deal between Israel Aircraft Industries and the Venezuelan Air Force to upgrade 42 F-16 fighter planes has been suspended following U.S. pressure on Israel. The media say that the U.S. is concerned about Venezuela's growing strength and about Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez's growing ties with Cuban President Fidel Castro. Maariv cited a Defense Ministry statement, according to which the U.S. and Israel are clarifying the issue. Jerusalem Post quoted Israeli sources as saying that it is not clear yet if the deal was only delayed on a temporary basis or if it would be canceled altogether. Yediot quoted senior GOI officials as saying Thursday that the move was the result of U.S.-Israel consultations. Ha'aretz quoted Israeli defense sources as saying that the U.S. is trying to transfer the deal to the American aircraft manufacturer Lockheed Martin.

Maariv reported that Knesset Member Binyamin Netanyahu is considering retiring from political life.

Maariv quoted right-wing activists as saying that for the first time in decades, they prayed on the Temple Mount on Wednesday. The newspaper cited the police's denial of their claim.

Leading media reported that a Palestinian teen suspected of throwing Molotov cocktails at Israeli cars was shot dead by IDF troops on Thursday evening near the town of Hussan, west of Bethlehem. Israel Radio reported that subsequently, Palestinians threw stones last night at Israeli vehicles traveling on the road bypassing Hussan, near the neighboring settlement of Betar Illit, wounding five Israelis.

Yediot, Maariv, and Ha'aretz quoted Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch, a senior U.S. commander, as saying on Thursday that an Israeli is among the more than 300 foreign fighters who have been captured in Iraq by U.S.-led troops and Iraqi security forces since April. Yediot and the Israeli-Arab newspaper Kul Al-Arab conducted a joint extensive interview with Attorney Khalil Dulaimi, one of Saddam Hussein's defenders. Dulaimi reportedly said that Saddam is convinced that Israel poisoned Yasser Arafat.

Leading media reported on Thursday's Israeli-Jordanian meeting regarding ways to combat avian influenza. Ha'aretz reported that it was decided that Jordanian veterinarians would attend study sessions about the disease in Israeli labs. Jerusalem Post reported that the two countries have set up a hotline on the issue.

Former O/C Southern Command Maj. Gen. Dan Harel was quoted as saying in an interview with Jerusalem Post ("A Reluctant General Goes To America") that he is looking forward to serving as Israel's military attache in Washington.

Yediot reported that former U.S. president Bill Clinton will be the keynote speaker at the November 14 event marking the 10th anniversary of the assassination of the late PM Yitzhak Rabin, which will be attended by dozens of world leaders.

Leading media reported that Microsoft founder and Chairman Bill Gates will arrive in Israel for the first time Tuesday evening as part of his annual European tour, presenting this year his vision for the "new world of work."

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1. Mideast:  
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Summary:  
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Diplomatic correspondent Shimon Shiffer wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "[The Palestinians] did not advance a millimeter Thursday toward their national goal of establishing a Palestinian state.... [But Israel's] sense of victory ... is liable to turn into a Pyrrhic victory, because

becoming aware of the reality in the territories will exact a heavy price in Israeli lives."

Senior columnist Dan Margalit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "It is not certain whether more Palestinian voters will now feel that their man has conquered the Israeli Bastille on the Potomac River."

Washington correspondent Orly Azolai wrote in Yediot Aharonot: "On Thursday in the Rose Garden, it looked as though the Middle East had never been farther away from President Bush. The accomplishment that will succeed in creating a turnabout will not come from there."

Arab affairs commentator Danny Rubinstein wrote in left-leaning, independent Ha'aretz: "The main reason for [the Palestinian leadership's] satisfaction was Bush's hint that Washington would not object to Hamas's participation in the PA's parliamentary elections."

Block Quotes:  
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I. "Abu Mazen Got Nothing"

Diplomatic correspondent Shimon Shiffer wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (October 21): "The Palestinians have no reason to feel optimistic over President Bush's remarks on Thursday. They did not advance a millimeter Thursday toward their national goal of establishing a Palestinian state.... Bush adopted Sharon's conception, which talks about progress in small steps while being strict about completing each step on the Roadmap, and refused to promise that a Palestinian state would be established by the end of his term in 2009.... The demands that Bush made of the Israeli side are worn out with their familiarity: ease restrictions for the Palestinians, stop building in the settlements and remove the illegal outposts. As for the issue of Hamas and the elections, Abu Mazen did not blink and did not concede to the Americans, saying: all the organizations will take part in the democratic process, only after elections will we deal with the issue of disarming them. What could be learned from the meeting last night is that Sharon will have to continue to deal in the future with the Palestinian entity alongside Israel with complications of economic dependency and security problems. In other words: the sense of victory over what didn't happen on Thursday in Washington is liable to turn into a Pyrrhic victory, because becoming aware of the reality in the territories will exact a heavy price in Israeli lives."

II. "A Presidential Embrace For the Rais"

Senior columnist Dan Margalit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (October 21): "The United States received Abu Mazen with regal honors.... [But] it is not certain whether more Palestinian voters will now feel that their man has conquered the Israeli Bastille on the Potomac River, or whether they view Abu Mazen as someone who went to Canossa this week.... Sharon has built a steady friendship with Bush and a verbal U.S.-Israeli understanding that matches the war on terror."

III. "Bush Has Problems of His Own"

Washington correspondent Orly Azolai wrote in Yediot Aharonot (October 21): "On Thursday, President Bush looked like someone stuck at a party to which he had been dragged, without any desire to go at all. He did not really listen to the words of Mahmoud Abbas. His glance went from place to place, as though he were looking at the reporters in order to see from which side the blow would come. He spoke of the need for peace between Israel and the Palestinians and of the vision of two states, but his voice was apathetic and at times he sounded like a worn-out record.... The first question asked of Bush on Thursday, precisely as he had feared, was about the leaks from the White House.... Bush wants to work on his place in history, as second-term American presidents do. On Thursday in the Rose Garden, it looked as though the Middle East had never been farther away from President Bush. The accomplishment that will succeed in creating a turnabout will not come from there."

IV. "Palestinian Satisfaction"

Arab affairs commentator Danny Rubinstein wrote in left-leaning, independent Ha'aretz (October 21): "The Palestinian leadership was pleased with the results of Thursday's meeting between Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas and U.S. President George W. Bush. The main reason for their satisfaction was Bush's hint that Washington would not object to Hamas's

participation in the PA's parliamentary elections.... Israel's demand that Hamas not be allowed to run in the elections and its threat to disrupt the elections in the West Bank frightened the Palestinian leadership.... Senior Palestinian officials therefore expressed the hope Thursday night that America's position would not change, and that Washington would ultimately accept Abbas's plan for dealing with Hamas, a plan that would enable the diplomatic process to resume following the Palestinian elections."

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12. Syria Governance:  
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Summary:  
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Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "For now, it must be hoped that the diplomatic approach [vis-a-vis Syria] led by [Secretary of State Condoleezza] Rice, who is more moderate than other voices in the Bush administration, will achieve the desired results without any military entanglements."

Block Quotes:  
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"Bashar in the Eye of the Storm"  
Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (October 21): "The establishment of an international front against Syria regarding Lebanon is a welcome development from Israel's standpoint. From the U.S. standpoint, however, Iraq is the burning issue.... If it becomes clear today that Assad was responsible in any way for Hariri's murder, this suspicion will be linked with his role as an abettor of terror in Iraq, as well as with his efforts to continue to tie Lebanon to his coattails. As a result, he will be labeled, almost officially, as a 'superfluous leader,' whose country would be 'appropriate' for American military action. But if this is the operative conclusion derived from the investigative report, it is liable to be hasty and simplistic.... The regime's opponents represent extremist ideologies, both religious and nonreligious. An American invasion of Syria -- even if it had British and French support along with UN approval -- would be liable to create a second Iraq, this time on Israel's border. In the aftermath of a western invasion, the terror trickling from Syria into Iraq might also start trickling south and east, into Israel. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice noted this week that the military option is always on the President's desk. But for now, it must be hoped that the diplomatic approach led by Rice, who is more moderate than other voices in the Bush administration, will achieve the desired results without any military entanglements."

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13. Germany: New Government:  
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Summary:  
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Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "We congratulate [Angela] Merkel as she prepares to assume the chancellorship and hope that under her leadership Germany will help tip Europe toward becoming more of a partner in confronting the Islamist jihad that threatens us all."

Block Quotes:  
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"Merkel's Challenge"

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (October 21): "Germany's reluctance to adopt America's view, that the Middle East's main problem is its totalitarianism, has been particularly disappointing considering its own past. Germany should not only back, but indeed lead the effort to confront the current totalitarian threat to the West, this time from militant Islam. This means openly and more robustly backing Israel inside the EU and the UN. Berlin must lead the way in demanding that the Palestinian leadership disarms terrorist groups or face a loss of financial aid. It also means forcing Iran to abandon its nuclear program and support for terrorism. We congratulate [Angela] Merkel as she prepares to assume the chancellorship and hope that under her leadership Germany will help tip Europe toward becoming more of a partner in confronting the Islamist jihad that threatens us all."